

BENCH-BAR-MEDIA CONFERENCE

MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 1998 MEETING

The Bench-Bar-Media Conference convened on March 19, 1998 in all three counties simultaneously at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was open to the public. Present (in New Castle County unless otherwise noted) were:

Members from the Bench

Vice Chancellor Jack B. Jacobs

Members from the Bar

Richard Kirk, Vice Chair

Howard Handelman

Eugene Bayard (in Sussex County)

Members from the Print Media

Rita Farrell

Jane Amari

John Taylor

Members from the Electronic Media

Michael Sigman, Chair

William D. Osborne

Marilyn Buerkle (in Kent County)

Jim Courtney (in Kent County)

[Excused absences were Justice Randy J. Holland, Judge Henry duPont Ridgeley and Todd Halliday.]

The meeting followed the attached agenda (distributed and posted beforehand).

1. Minutes of January 15, 1998 Meeting

The members of the Conference approved the minutes of the meeting of January 15, 1998, which had been circulated beforehand.

2. New Members of the Conference

Bill Osborne circulated the attached membership roster of media representatives showing new terms of office. This list resulted from a comprehensive review of membership with the constituent media organizations.

3. Correspondence - Department of Justice Program

The chairman circulated the attached letter from Attorney General M. Jane Brady thanking the Conference for allowing her staff to present its concerns about crimes of exploitation involving the infirm, especially the elderly, at the January meeting. Howard Handelman asked what follow up the various media representatives had done as result of the presentation. The Attorney General's letter indicates her intention to do follow up with various media representatives.

4. Internet Seminar

Dick Kirk distributed the attached brochure for a one day seminar on the Internet to be held on Friday, April 24, 1997. Speaker participation is now almost completely set. A special registration rate for members and associates of the Conference will be offered to encourage maximum attendance by the media. Members of the Conference will be recognized at the seminar.

5. Member Issues

Mike Sigman asked each member to review any topics of general interest to the Conference. Rita Farrell had previously circulated the attached summary of discussions between media representatives and Tom Ralston, the Superior Court Administrator, regarding press coverage of high profile trials. She also discussed issues related to the proposed new Justice Center. She said that Todd Halliday had pulled together many good ideas related to the needs of the electronic media, and asked any other Conference member with such ideas to forward them to her. Finally she talked about the document retrieval service for exhibits and other court filings currently available to the media, which is apparently very satisfactory. Rita pointed out that the Prothonotaries in each county will establish accounts for media representatives so that copying can be done quickly and certainly.

Vice Chancellor Jacobs suggested that the courts may want to use a system of lights to allow media representatives to alert the trial judges when witnesses or lawyers become inaudible, as an unobtrusive means of communicating.

Gene Bayard suggested that media representatives meet regularly with the Resident Judges of the Superior Court in each county as a means of coordinating our various issues.

6. Old Business

There was no old business remaining from any prior session.

7. New Business

No new business was introduced.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on May 21, 1998. Once again, video conferencing will be available from the Grand Jury room in New Castle County, and the Judges' Chambers in the Kent County Courthouse and the Sussex County Courthouse. This will be the final meeting of the Conference for the year, so new leadership will be selected. According to custom, the Vice Chair moves up to become Chair. The next Vice Chair should be a judicial representative. Judicial members should come to the meeting prepared to submit the name of a candidate.

In the meantime, however, all members of the Conference are urged to attend the Internet Seminar, and to bring their colleagues.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:15 p.m.